

The experience of work-life balance for women doctors and nurses in Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how a specific context supports or hinders work-life balance (WLB) experiences focusing on women doctors and nurses in Malaysia. WLB and gender formed the conceptual basis of a qualitative study using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The 26 participants were employed across public and private healthcare sectors. A systematic multi-step data analytical procedure produced three key themes which contribute to the contemporary debate on WLB. In Malaysia, contextual factors exert a strong influence on WLB experiences for women doctors and nurses. Due to gender norms, women carry the burden of dual responsibilities for both professional and familial duties which disrupts WLB. Notably, collegiality at work facilitates WLB but is an informal mechanism rooted in a collectivist society. Finally, staff shortages in the healthcare sector also impede WLB. Based on the key themes, recommendations are made for a sustainable workforce in the Malaysian healthcare industry.